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Letters

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Additional Keywords

Ken Raney

LETTERS

Mary M. Stolzenbach

Washington, D.C.

MYTHLORE XXIX was a very good issue in general. May I venture to correct Paul Kocher on two points: 1. The name of MacDonald's hero was Anodos, not Anados. I think this has significance, as *anodos* in Greek means something like "ascending" or "returning." 2. Of course the article is mainly about Tolkien - but it is not "hard" to say "just when (MacDonald) became known to" Lewis, at least, among the Inklings. In *Surprised by Joy*, at the end of Ch. XI, Lewis describes how he came to read *Phantastes*, one autumn during the time (1914-1916) he was studying with Kirkpatrick. Mr. Kocher's article gives something of a false impression regarding Lewis' discovery of MacDonald.

Benjamin Urrutia

Albany, N.Y.

Though I enjoyed most of Pierre Berube's letter in *Mythlore* 26, I was taken aback and a little annoyed by the last paragraph. Real angels are not limited by what "theologians allow" at all. To know what angels are like, we must not turn to theologians, but to the Bible. From the Holy Scriptures we learn that, theologians and Mr. Berube to the contrary, angels are very much material, and Tolkien's description of the Maiar is quite consistent with God's revealed word. In Genesis 6:1-4, we read that "the sons of God" "took wives" from "the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown." I suggest that Tolkien's account of Melian, a female angel, becoming the wife of King Elwe Greycloak, is a simple reversal of this ancient tradition, and harmonious therewith. In Genesis 18:6-8, we read how Abraham and Sarah prepared a meal of veal, cakes, butter and milk for visiting angels - "and they did eat". In Genesis 32:24-32, Jacob wrestles with an angel, who puts his thigh out of joint. So angels can take wives, beget children, eat, drink, wrestle, and inflict physical damage. How material can you get?

In Job 4:18-19 we read of angels who cannot be trusted too much, and who commit "folly". We read of angels who committed sin in Jude, verse 6. If they can sin (and the Bible plainly says that they can), then they can repent, for God does not create people who can fall away from Him and cannot return. If theology says He does, then theology can go to Hell, where it belongs. As for me, I prefer to believe that the real angels are those that the Bible describes.

Aule's creation of the Khazad seems to me more a case of the "folly" mentioned in Job 4:18 than outright sin. At any rate, that Tolkien's angels are so much like the real ones, and not like the phantoms invented by theologians, is another example of Tolkien's greatness.

Thomas M. Egan

Woodside, N. Y.

Greetings from my corner of Middle-earth. As usual, MYTHLORE, issues #28 and 29 are magnificently done. The covers are excellently crafted in detail - yet I must cavil at "Boromir's Fall" (ML #28) by Ron Stone. The Gothic overtones don't convince. The Orcs are too dignified; they look like strange folk but not demonic. Boromir seems too calm, too "relaxed" even?

I enjoy Glen's personal "encounters" with Tolkien in the editor's column. I met Tolkien through a combination of curiosity and a reference to him in the early 1960's by C.S. Lewis (in *That Hideous Strength*). So many scholars referred to him off and on (pre-1965) in books of English literature. So many "side-references" to him by SF and fantasy authors like L. Sprague de Camp in paperback-pulp! So in 1965 I took the plunge. There was so much in him and his Lord of

the Rings to love. I actually laughed, and then was really stricken, as I read of Frodo, Sam and Gandalf. I ended up loving the characters and dreaming of those apprehensive notes of Tolkien's appendices. His religious values as a Catholic also attracted me. So much fantasy fiction is amoral, even hostile to the sacred. It's simply "Law vs. Chaos" with Law a pragmatic stability to folk who have no real belief or desire for a "metaphysical" social order in human affairs (i.e. a true Natural Law ethic), just make sure there's no riots in the streets and thievery is kept in check. Tolkien doesn't preach in his fiction, yet he offers us a real model of love and heroism attached to eternal and absolute moral and doctrinal values. The tragedy inherent in normal existence is given a sense of purpose with the dignity and worth of all creatures respected. Our decisions in Middle-earth are always important because of Tolkien's Catholic background of belief. Sorrow and pain won't go away for all that, yet their nature is changed. Too much fantasy fiction is laced with an overlay of trivial talk about freedom - with no links to the eternal. The past has no purpose except to connote hoary horror. There is even a growing element of philosophical pessimism in some of the best talents in fantasy fiction today (a la Michael Moorcock).

Well, I'll leave off the 'preaching to the converted', here. Annette Harper is superb in her portrayal (back cover, issue 28) of the marriage of Aragorn/Elessar with Arwen the Elf princess. The facing posture of human and elf with Arwen the reconciliation point of two races of the Children of God is well handled indeed. The robes and hair styles are part of the atmosphere of glory and dignity of intelligent beings made to shape a world. I especially love the demure innocence of the raven-locked Arwen. The flowers also aid the sense of innocence joined to beauty and love. Yes, long pointed ears do aid the identification of an elf figure. I notice though that Miss Harper fails somewhat in her back cover for issue 29. The fingers seem unreal, queer. They distract the onlooker. Gandalf is acceptable enough, but Aragorn is just a shade too delicate, even effeminate. Sorry!

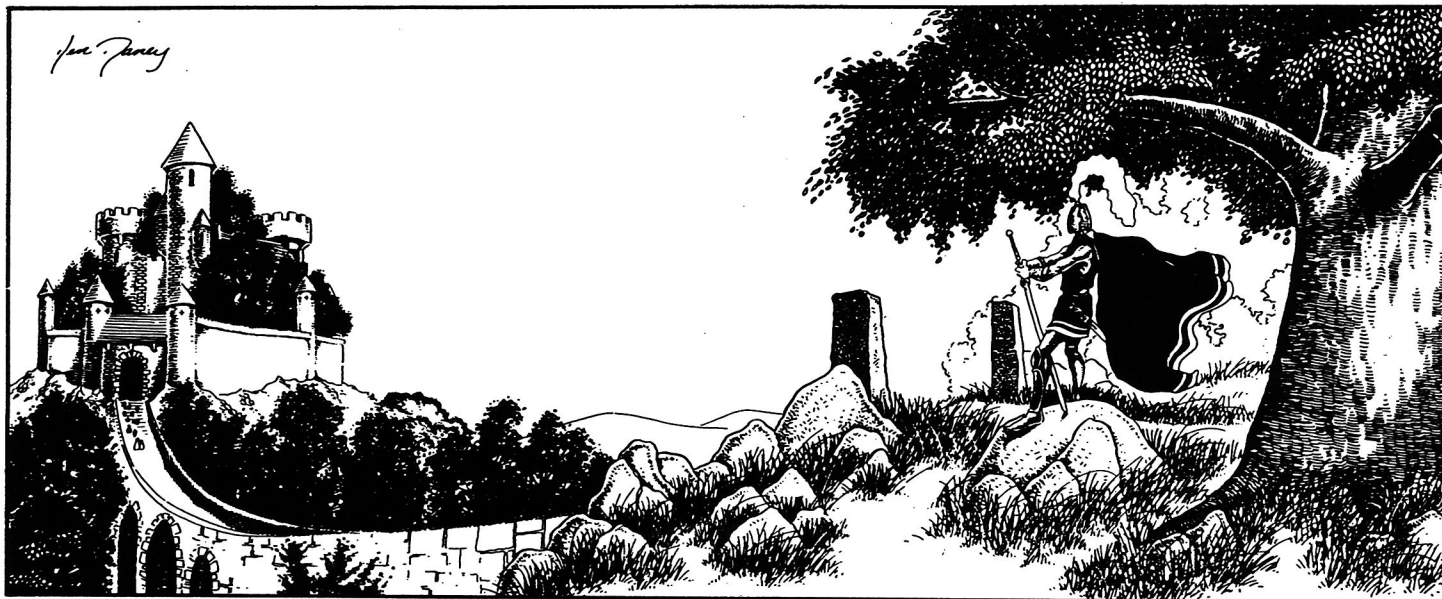
The art is really what makes MYTHLORE so great, so professional. The cover of the dragon Eustace and his nemesis/savior Aslan is a miracle of focus and detail. The use of dark shadow and contrasting light brings us to see the power and the pathos of the conflict (and entreaty) involved. Aslan's calm poise is a fit symbol for Godhood here. Full credit to Stephen Peregrine! Ars gratia artis, indeed.

For the rest, Tim Kirk, Edith Crowe, and Melody Grady are worthy adornments for MYTHLORE 29. A variety of styles adds to the pleasing effect on our imagination, and our dreams of wonder. Sarah Beach is another great talent for her visions of Elf folk and the incarnate Valar (Elwe and maiar Melian are especially great - those eyes capture the sense of a foreign but pleasing beauty!) In MYTHLORE 28, "Gandalf on Shadowfax" by Pasha (who is he?) is a rugged masculine power, no hint of the aged scholar-figure too many artists make of Mithrandir. Professor-figures are fine in their place, but we need more the hint of the prophet warrior for Gandalf the Grey!

The articles are all great as usual. Congratulations on having Vera Chapman write for you in ML 28. (Her "Three Royal Monkeys" is a small gem of speculation. Long may she write!)

Have you read my first published short story, "Lady of the Lake", in MYTHELLANY? Any criticism is appreciated. I have another story, "The Mists of Time" about a young warrior-hero Kulhevich accepted by Eldritch Tales.

Your knightly photo in issue 29 was most impressive. Are you Aragorn here? Is Arwen your daughter? She seems to



find that standard heavy to carry! Prof. Christopher looks quite the prototype of the professional scholar. Give him my best.

((My persona is Elrond, and thus my daughter is named Arwen, which is her actual name as well. — G.G.

Jared Lobdell

Pittsburgh, PA

Dear Glen:

I was interested to read John Ratcliff's "She and Tolkien" in MYTHLORE 28. You will recall my paper "The Lord of the Rings and the Edwardian Mode" at the MLA Tolkien Seminar in New York in 1976 — you were, I know, in the audience — in which I quoted, *inter alia*, the parallel passages on the death of Ayesha and the death of Saruman. You, and your readers, may be interested to know that the 1976 paper now appears as Chapter I of my England and Always: Tolkien's World of the Rings (Eerdmans, December 1981, pb.). By the way, I think I'd part company with Mr. Ratcliff on finding any influence of later Haggard on JRRT (I doubt he read Haggard after 1910, or even earlier), but for She, and perhaps KSM, the effect is strong.

Alexei Kondratiev

Flushing, N. Y.

On the subject of the Mythopoeic Fantasy Award: yes, by all means retain it! That few people actually participate in an election often does not mean that those who abstained from voting are not interested in the results of the vote. The MFA is also a constant link to current fantasy writing, and ensures that new works will be discussed in the context of the great tradition they sprang from. If sometimes the actual recipients of the Award seem to have only a remote connection with the mythopoeic genre of high fantasy we associate with the Inklings, then let that be a spur to argument, not categorical rejection. Let those who liked the work defend it; let there be a polemic, thus making Mythlore an even livelier journal.

For instance, portions of Mary Stewart's Merlin trilogy received MFAs in the past. While I enjoyed Mary Stewart's work, I see little in its style and imagery to place it in the high fantasy tradition, and its treatment of the Arthurian material seems far removed from the wellsprings of myth. Yet I am eager to hear arguments in its defense from Mary Stewart enthusiasts who have seen and felt what I have omitted to see and feel. This year Morgan Llwyelyn's Lion of Ireland was high on the list of nominees. I found it a moderately entertaining costume romance (several notches

below Mary Stewart) with some effectively moving passages but very conventional characterization and a lot of embarrassing anachronism. There may, however, be riches in it that I have ignored, and which those who nominated it could point out.

While the number of Tolkien illustrators continues to grow, I notice an unsettling sameness about their representations. It would be unfortunate if a conventional style of "Tolkien illustration" were to gel just when we are beginning to discover the true range and depth of Tolkien's world. At present the convention could be best described as "mock-mediaeval": costumes and furniture adapted from European models between 600 and 1300 A.D., probably in imitation of the larger convention of fairy-tale illustration. While this "mock-mediaeval" style is convincing with Third Age tales, which are often related to early Celto-Germanic literary themes and social traditions, the First and Second Ages obviously require more original treatment. From the wealth of newly published material one gathers that the First and Second Ages possessed physical and cultural characteristics uniquely their own, and very different from those of the Third Age. Yet, with a few exceptions, illustrators seem content to apply the "mock-mediaeval" norms to The Silmarillion as well. Wouldn't it be time to reach out toward bolder, less familiar visual representations, more consonant with the real breadth of Tolkien's inventiveness? Tolkien's own depictions of Numenorean artwork look very un-European; and he once described Numenorean civilization as yet taken "Egyptian" in character. Why have so few artists as yet taken his lead? I would be interested in further comment on the subject.

AUCTION — continued from page 31

5. Calligraphed poem. "The Nightingale," appeared on p. 23 of ML 29. Original size: 12 1/2 x 17 3/4". \$18
6. Book. Cut of the Silent Planet by C.S. Lewis. New York: Avon, 1949. Good, paperback. \$8
7. Art. "Idril, Tuor, and Maeglin," appears on back cover of this issue. Original size: 11 1/2 x 16". \$20
8. Book. The Nine Tailors by Dorothy L. Sayers. London: Victor Gollancz, 1936. Fair, cloth. \$15
9. Art. "Tuor and Ulmo," appeared on page 35 of ML 29. Original size: 11 1/2 x 15". \$15
10. Magazine. Fantasy and Science Fiction, Feb. 1956, contains "The Shoddy Lands" by C.S. Lewis. Fair. \$7
11. Art. "The Eavesdropper," appears on p. 18 of this issue. Original size: 11 1/2 x 15". \$10
12. Book. Gilbert Keith Chesterton by Maisie Ward. London: Sheed & Ward, 1945. Fair, cloth. \$15
13. Art. "Elwe and Melian," appeared on p. 24 of ML 29. Original size: 11 1/2 x 15". \$10
14. Book. The Golden Key: A Study of The Fiction of George MacDonald by Robert Lee Wolff. New Haven: Yale U.P., 1961. Good, cloth, dj. \$15